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Letter dated 2 April 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, on Monday, 15 April 2013, the Security Council will hold a briefing entitled "Prevention of conflicts in Africa: addressing the root causes", under the presidency of Rwanda. In order to steer the debate, Rwanda has prepared the attached concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Eugène-Richard **Gasana**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

13-27763 (E) 050413

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Annex to the letter dated 2 April 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for a briefing in the Security Council: Prevention of conflicts in Africa: addressing the root causes Monday, 15 April 2013

I. Introduction

1. On Monday, 15 April 2013, Rwanda will organize a Security Council briefing entitled "Prevention of conflicts in Africa: addressing the root causes".

II. Context

2. According to the *Highlights of Security Council Practice 2012* prepared by the Security Council Affairs Division of the Department of Political Affairs,[1] the Council held, in 2012, 90 meetings on African issues, which accounts for 68 per cent of the Council agenda. This percentage was exactly the same for the year 2011.

3. The conflicts come at a huge human and financial cost to Africa and the international community as a whole. Thousands of innocent civilians are killed every year, especially women and children; millions become refugees or are internally displaced, and infrastructure and economies are destroyed. Moreover, the social fabric within a society is broken, with long-term consequences for families, communities and nations. The burden on United Nations peacekeeping operations continues to grow; during its first 40 years, the Security Council established only 1 peacekeeping operation in Africa, the United Nations Operation in the Congo in 1960, in contrast to the period 1989 to 2011, in which 25 operations were mandated in Africa.

4. None of these conflicts is the result of an unavoidable clash between civilizations or cultures. Indeed, all African conflicts occur according to a similar pattern and have deep-rooted causes, such as the legacy of colonialism; nationality and identity; ethnic tensions and discrimination; lack of rule of law; violations of human rights; political exclusion; corruption and bad governance; foreign interference; poverty and youth unemployment. Therefore, preventing conflicts is possible, provided that all relevant stakeholders take appropriate responsibility.

5. The Secretary-General wrote in his 2001 report on prevention of armed conflicts (S/2001/574): "We have an obligation to the victims of violence in Rwanda and elsewhere to take seriously this challenge of prevention. I have pledged to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention." More than a decade later however, too little has been done to move from the day-to-day management of conflicts towards proactively building the capacity of societies to develop their own culture of conflict prevention, through skills, mechanisms and institutions for resolving disputes and addressing the root causes of conflicts.

[1] www.un.org/en/sc/inc/pages/pdf/highlights/2012.pdf.

III. Scope of the briefing

6. The 1997 report of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict grouped conflict prevention in two categories: operational prevention and structural prevention. "Operational prevention" refers to immediate instruments used to prevent an imminent outbreak of conflict (i.e. preventive diplomacy, early-warning systems, sanctions) while "structural prevention" addresses the underlying political and/or socioeconomic causes of conflicts. A third category, "systemic prevention", was also identified. It refers to global challenges that can have a multiplier effect with respect to conflicts (i.e. climate change, terrorism, transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, illegal financial flows).

7. This briefing will focus on the structural prevention of conflicts and on how Member States and their civil societies can work together to address deep-rooted conflict by equipping themselves with new transformative skills, mechanisms and institutions for preventing violence and resolving disputes, as it intends to foster an exchange of views on lessons learned in addressing political and socioeconomic causes of conflict through proactive, non-violent and inclusive processes.

IV. Background

8. The Secretary-General, in his 1992 report entitled "An agenda for peace" (A/47/277-S/24111), outlined conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy within the United Nations. He noted, in his report entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (A/52/871-S/1998/318), that, although the United Nations was intended to deal with inter-State conflicts, it increasingly faced more intra-State conflicts, which constitute a large majority of the conflicts in Africa. The Secretary-General identified several sources of conflict in Africa, notably historical legacies, internal and external factors, and economic motives. He went on to propose concrete recommendations for how to address these root causes of conflict at the stages of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

9. On the recommendation of the Secretary-General, an Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa was established in January 2002, which was mandated to come up with recommendations regarding conflict prevention and resolution in Africa and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. Eleven years after its creation, the Working Group needs a new impetus, aimed at ensuring that the work of the Group has a concrete impact on the prevention role of the Security Council.

10. At the same time, the African Union in 2002 adopted a peace and security architecture, the main components of which are the Peace and Security Council, the Continental Early Warning System and the Panel of the Wise. In 10 years of existence, the Peace and Security Council has played a central role in the prevention of conflict and the promotion of peace and security on the continent and has become a credible institution vis-à-vis the Security Council.

11. The African Union also established, in 2003, an African Peer Review Mechanism, in the framework of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The Mechanism reviews best practices in Africa, with a view to sharing experiences in democracy, political and economic governance. The ultimate objective of the Mechanism is to foster the adoption of policies, standards

and practices that lead to economic growth and political stability, thus addressing the root causes of conflict on the continent.

12. In 2005, the African Union adopted a post-conflict reconstruction and development policy, which testifies to the African Union's commitment to invest in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction. On 30 January 2007, the African Union Summit adopted the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, which came into force on 15 February 2012. This Charter is an additional tool for addressing the root causes of conflict in Africa, as it provides for specific commitments by member States, including on democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as well as sanctions against contravening member States.

V. Proposed issues to be discussed

13. Against this backdrop, the Security Council should consider the following issues:

- Role of national Governments and civil society in addressing the root causes of conflict, including challenges and recommendations on the way forward. Particular attention should be paid to best practices and lessons learned among African States in preventing conflict, with a focus on home-grown solutions.
- The effectiveness of national infrastructures for peace as a home-grown solution for strengthening indigenous capacities for conflict prevention.
- Preventive measures and strategic initiatives to mitigate and forestall the resurgence of violent conflict in post-conflict and transitional contexts.
- Collaboration and partnerships among the United Nations and regional, subregional and non-governmental organizations in detecting conflict drivers and defining modalities to address them before they lead to violent conflicts.
- Role and challenges of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa in launching concrete initiatives in conflict prevention, including through follow-up mechanisms to the annual United Nations Security Council-African Union Peace and Security Council dialogue.
- Assessing the effectiveness of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture in Africa, particularly the Continental Early Warning System and the Panel of the Wise, with a view to enhancing African conflict prevention capabilities.
- Role and challenges of the African Peer Review Mechanism, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and other African Union instruments in preventing conflicts in Africa.

VI. Format and outcome

14. The meeting, to be held at the ministerial level, will be a briefing. The Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union (Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia) will be the main briefers. The expected outcome document is a presidential statement.